

THE GROWTH OF INDIVIDUALISM

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the main army, that the social work of the Church was conceived to lie. Its characteristic expressions in the eighteenth century were the relief of the poor, the care of the sick, and the establishment of schools. In spite of the genuine, if somewhat unctuous, solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the poorer classes, which inspired the evangelical revival, it abandoned the fundamental brain-work of criticism and construction to the rationalist and the humanitarian.

Surprise has sometimes been expressed that the Church should not have been more effective in giving inspiration and guidance during the immense economic reorganization to which tradition has assigned the not very felicitous name of the " Industrial Revolution/

It did not give it, because it did not possess it. There were, no doubt, special conditions to account for its silence—mere ignorance and inefficiency, the supposed teachings of political economy, and, after 1790, the terror of all humanitarian movements inspired by France. But the explanation of its attitude is to be sought, less in the peculiar circumstances of the moment, than in the prevalence of a temper which accepted the established

order of class relations as needing no
vindication before
any higher tribunal, and which made
religion, not its
critic or its accuser, but its anodyne, its
apologist, and
its drudge. It was not that there was any
relapse into
abnormal inhumanity. It was that the
very idea
that the Church possessed an independent
standard of
values, to which social institutions were
amenable, had
been abandoned. The surrender had been
made long
before the battle began. The spiritual
blindness which
made possible the general acquiescence in
the horrors
of the early factory system was, not a
novelty, but the
habit of a century.